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No. LTC# **333-2013**

LETTER TO COMMISSION

TO: Mayor Matti Herrera Bower and Members of the City Commission

FROM: Jimmy L. Morales, City Manager

DATE: September 9, 2013

SUBJECT: **FDOT 41st Street Pedestrian Safety Study/Nautilus Middle School Crossing**

This item has been requested by Commissioner Gongora for discussion at the September 11, 2013 Commission meeting.

The purpose of this Letter to Commission (LTC) is to provide an update on the Florida Department of Transportation (FDOT) Pedestrian Safety Study along 41st Street/Arthur Godfrey Road and the City's ongoing efforts to ensure the safety of Nautilus Middle School students crossing 41st Street.

It should be noted that FDOT has previously conducted traffic signal warrant analyses that evaluated a new pedestrian signal and crosswalk at Jefferson Avenue as well as the relocation of the existing signal at Garden Avenue to Jefferson Avenue. Both scenarios were found to be unwarranted due to geometric constraints at 41st Street and Jefferson Avenue, including the proximity of the signal at Meridian Avenue and the existing horizontal curve at Meridian Avenue which affects stopping-sight distance. In addition, the data collected by FDOT concluded that the existing volume of pedestrians and crashes occurring at Jefferson Avenue and 41st Street over a three-year period did not meet minimum thresholds established by the Manual on Uniform Traffic Control Devices (MUTCD).

As a result of several meetings with FDOT over the last couple of years regarding the safety of Nautilus Middle School students crossing 41st Street and several motions from the City's Committee for Quality Education (QEC) urging the FDOT to address the Committee's outstanding concerns, FDOT conducted a comprehensive corridor safety study to evaluate the safety of pedestrians and motorists along the 41st Street corridor from Alton Road to west of Pine Tree Drive. The study evaluated each intersection along the corridor and the intersection of 41st Street and Jefferson Avenue in particular. The study evaluated all types of crashes along the corridor from 2008 – 2010. The study, however, did not evaluate an expansion of the existing North Beach Elementary school zone on 41st Street to include Nautilus Middle School.

The FDOT safety report recommended the construction of a concrete median with some landscape features from Alton Road to Sheridan Avenue, additional school crossing signage, minor signalization improvements, and landscaping features to discourage mid-block crossings at unsignalized locations (e.g. jaywalking) along the corridor (See Attachment). In order to accommodate a median on 41st Street at Nautilus Middle School, the existing eastbound to northbound left turn movement at the intersection of 41st Street and Jefferson Avenue would need to be eliminated.

The FDOT study recommended the following safety improvements for the intersection of 41st Street and Jefferson Avenue:

- Installation of a pedestrian-scale fence either along the proposed median or within the existing landscaped area between the south sidewalk and the curb (in front of the Burger King).
- Providing high density landscape along 41st Street between Garden Avenue and east of Jefferson Avenue between the sidewalk and back of curb to physically restrict mid-block crossings.
- Installation of signs directing pedestrians to use crosswalks.
- Trimming landscaping on the south side of the roadway for better visibility exiting driveways.
- Installation of 'Do Not Enter' signs facing southbound on Jefferson Avenue.
- Improvement of street name signs

The draft FDOT safety study has been reviewed by the Miami Beach Police, Fire, and Public Works Departments as well as Miami-Dade County Public Works and Waste Management Department. Due to frequent use of 41st Street by emergency vehicle accessing Mount Sinai Hospital, the City's Fire Department does not support a raised median along the entire stretch of 41st Street, however, Fire Department would support a raised median with a pedestrian scale fence only at Jefferson Avenue to serve as a physical deterrent to student crossing 41st Street illegally at that location.

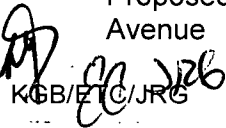
The City's and County's Public Works Departments have some mutual concerns regarding the limited effectiveness of the proposed raised median. While the pedestrian-scale fence in the median may deter some students from crossing at mid-block locations, other students who may choose to cross illegally may be exposed to greater risk by attempting to navigate around the fence to find refuge at the unobstructed ends of the median where only a concrete traffic separator would exist.

Currently, City Police resources have been assigned to assist with directing Nautilus Middle School students to cross at Garden Avenue and at Meridian Avenue. In addition, a City-funded school patrol liaison and a Miami-Dade County School Board police officer provide assistance during morning drop-off hours.

Should you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Attachment:

Proposed Conditions Diagram – Arthur Godfrey Road from Alton Road to Meridian Avenue


KGB/ETC/JRG

